



Testimony in Support of SB2

Dear Chairs Linehan and Anwar, Vice Chairs Welander and Bradley, Ranking Members Martin and Dauphinais, and Members of the Committee on Children,

My name is Esha Bhattacharya. I am a resident of New Haven and am testifying to communicate my strong support for Connecticut's SB2: *An Act Concerning The Safety, Education And Social Equity Of Children In Response To The Pandemic*.

Mental health training and services are important to me because mental health is an extremely important issue that can be detrimental to a person, their friends, and their family. Especially for people who are going through their developmental stages of life, being isolated due to the pandemic can lead to a downward spiral of mental health. NPR and AAP both suggest that social isolation and loss of in person services due to the pandemic have increased teen suicide rates across the US. The QPR training referenced in this bill is backed by years of research and theory, and it proven to be effective. After state mandated training in Tennessee, over 42% of participants identified at least one at-risk youth and intervened within six months of taking the course. Teen suicide is extremely important to me because of the way that it has influenced my life, and the identification of an at-risk teenager could be the difference between life and death.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenges students face every day. The effects of this pandemic, especially in children and adolescents will be felt for years, even after everyone has returned to in-person learning. SB2 seeks to address mental health challenges of CT's students by establishing mental health training for many school employees and licensed healthcare professionals. Funding data shows that lower-income students and students of color are disproportionately impacted by the current lack of mental health access in schools. Passing this bill would be a crucial step in addressing and improving the social-emotional and educational outcomes of all students in the state.

I strongly support SB 2 and urge you to favorably vote the bill out of the Committee on Children.

Sincerely,

Esha Bhattacharya
New Haven, CT